

Amendments to the Claims

1 1. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the
2 ~~steps of~~, in a central computer system, automatically, that is, independent of any
3 required human intervention:
4 i) receiving over a transmission channel an electronic representation of an
5 image of a physical form that embodies a report concerning at least one parameter from
6 at least one sender, the form having a plurality of data fields, each corresponding to an
7 indicator of at least a partial value of at least one of the parameters;
8 ii) identifying the location of the data fields in the received representation
9 of the image of the form;
10 iii) automatically both extracting report data from the report and
11 automatically storing the extracted report data in a memory;
12 for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;
13 associating the received report with the corresponding third party;
14 associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the
15 third parties; and
16 ~~via the network, allowing access by the fourth party to at least a selected portion~~
17 ~~of the extracted report data from the respective sender;~~
18 in which:
19 the third party is an agency that communicates with the central computer system
20 using an agency computer system;
21 the fourth party is a client of the agency and communicates with the central
22 computer system using a client computer system, the agency and client being
23 contractually related entities;
24 the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
25 tasks for the client;
26 the at least one parameter is includes time worked by the sender on behalf of the
27 client; and
28 further comprising, within the central computer system:

29 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing receiving access
30 requests by from the agency and the client sent through their respective computer
31 systems to respective party-specific portions of the extracted report data defined
32 according to the respective party-specific rules specific to each party, and responding to
33 the access requests by returning the requested report data to the agency and client,
34 respectively, including automatically, that is, independent of any required human
35 intervention, completing any requests for and allowing at least one third party action of
36 interactive and iterative review, modification or annotation, inclusive, of the report data
37 by the agency and client according to each party's respective party-specific rules;
38 whereby the central computer system is an intermediary system between the
39 sender on the one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes
40 different interfaces to the sender, agency and client.

1 2. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network,
3 whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third
4 party.

1 3. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 2, further comprising the following
2 steps:
3 storing the report extracted data in the memory in a predetermined common
4 format;
5 before transferring the extracted report data to any third party, converting the
6 extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party,
7 whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software
8 may receive and process extracted report data from the same memory within the central
9 computer system.

1 4. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of storing in the
2 memory third-party indicated annotations associated with the extracted report data.

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1 5. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
2 receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at
3 least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and
4 upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a
5 corrected report.

1 6. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing an image of the report as received; and
3 via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the
4 third party is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

7-8. (Canceled)

1 9. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, ~~in which the report is a physical~~
2 ~~form, further comprising the steps of, within the central system:~~
3 ~~automatically receiving from any of a plurality of the senders, via a transmission~~
4 ~~channel, an electronic representation of an image of the physical form, the form having~~
5 ~~a plurality of data fields, each corresponding to an indicator of at least a partial value of~~
6 ~~at least one of the parameters;~~
7 ~~— automatically identifying the location of the data fields in the received~~
8 ~~representation of the image of the form;~~
9 ~~— automatically extracting from the identified data fields the at least partial values of~~
10 ~~the corresponding parameters; and~~
11 automatically storing the extracted values-report data in a predetermined
12 common format in the memory for subsequent processing.

1 10. (Original) A method as in claim 9, in which the electronic representation of
2 the image of the physical form is generated using a conventional facsimile machine,
3 whereby the transmission channel is a standard telephone line.

1 11. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 9, further including the step of
2 transferring the stored extracted values to the third party via the network, all processing
3 of the physical form after transmission by the sender up to and including transfer to the
4 third party via the network thereby taking place automatically, that is, independent of
5 any required human intervention.

1 12. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the
2 steps of, in a central system as in claim 9, further comprising:
3 ~~receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;~~
4 ~~automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the~~
5 ~~extracted report data in a memory in a predetermined common format;~~
6 ~~for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;~~
7 associating the received report with the corresponding third party;
8 converting the extracted report data into a format specified by the rules
9 associated with that third party, whereby third parties operating different hardware
10 platforms and processing software may receive and process extracted report data from
11 the same memory within the central computer system;
12 ~~via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing at least one third party~~
13 ~~action of interactive and iterative access, review and modification or annotation,~~
14 ~~inclusive, by the third party to at least a selected third party specific portion of the~~
15 ~~extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party specific rules;~~
16 transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network,
17 whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third
18 party;
19 ~~associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the~~
20 ~~third parties;~~
21 ~~via the network, allowing interactive and iterative access, review and modification~~
22 ~~and/or annotation by a fourth party to at least a selected fourth party specific portion of~~
23 ~~the extracted report data from the respective sender;~~
24 ~~in which:~~
25 ~~the third party is an agency;~~

26 ——— the fourth party is a client of the employment agency;
27 ——— the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
28 tasks for the client; and
29 ——— the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;
30 ——— the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one
31 hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to
32 the sender, agency and client.

13-18. (Canceled)